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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/15/2020  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [IR](#) [QA](#)  
SUBJECT: IRANIAN NAVAL VISIT TO QATAR COINCIDES WITH ANNUAL  
U.S.-ISLAMIC FORUM

Classified By: Ambassador Joseph E. LeBaron, for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

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(C) KEY POINTS  
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-- An Iranian war vessel and naval support vessel docked in the Port of Doha February 13 for a four-day port call coinciding with the dates of the annual U.S.-Islamic Forum. Both Secretary Clinton and Senator Kerry (D-MA) delivered public remarks at the Forum.

-- 300 cadets aboard the support vessel toured the Qatari naval facility as part of the visit.

-- According to a military source, the Iranian visit is an outcome of the July visit to Tehran by Qatar's Armed Forces Chief of Staff.

-- According to navy sources, it has been over ten years since the last port call by Iranian navy vessels.

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(C) COMMENTS  
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-- Both the Secretary and Senator Kerry spoke about the Iranian nuclear program in their speeches at the Forum, but given the last-minute decision by Secretary Clinton to participate in the Forum, we do not believe the Iranian naval visit was arranged with her presence in mind.

-- This is not the first time the Qataris have given Iran a spotlight on an otherwise U.S. stage, however. When Treasury Secretary Paulson visited in May 2008, Qatar announced the same day that the sole authorized Iranian bank in Qatar could open a second branch. (The Iranians had been pressing to open more banks, not just a branch for the existing bank.)

-- As in the Treasury example, the coincidental treatment afforded to Iran on the margins of this high-level USG visit is of little substance and offers another example of Qatar's careful balancing of its public relations with the U.S. and Iran.

-- Another element downplaying the importance of this naval visit is the absence from Doha of the head of Qatar's navy, who is currently on a long-scheduled trip abroad.

End Key Points and Comments.

11. (U) An Iranian missile Corvette and a logistical support vessel arrived February 13 at the Port of Doha. The vessels' arrival coincided with the opening of the annual U.S.-Islamic Forum, hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and organized by Brookings. The ships are scheduled to leave Doha on February 17, the day after the Forum closes. Both Secretary Clinton and Senator John Kerry (D-MA), the Chairman

of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, delivered speeches at the Forum.

¶2. (C) According to a contact of the Defense Attache Office, the visit was scheduled several months ago and is an outcome of Qatari Armed Forces Chief of Staff Al-Attiyah's July visit to Tehran. The 300 Iranian cadets who arrived on the support vessel toured the Qatari naval facility, suggesting that the visit had been planned for some time. They were not received by Brigadier-General Mohammed Al Muhannadi, the commander of the Qatari navy, who is currently on a previously-scheduled trip abroad.

¶3. (U) DAO will provide other details on the visit SEPTTEL.

Lebaron